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# SIDELINED NOT RETIRED

The idea of a V8 Supercar season without Greg Murphy was almost beyond belief, but that's the way it is in 2013. One of the most popular drivers tells what his plans are and why retirement isn't an option... yet.

**I**f you think stepping down from a full-time drive in Australia's premier motorsport category means Greg Murphy has the time or inclination to sip cocktails by the pool, think again.

The 40-year-old Kiwi is keeping his race skills sharp with his New Zealand V8 SuperTourer commitments (in the Mike Pero Racing Commodore) as well as preparing to race with Holden Racing Team (HRT) in this year's endurance events, in a return to the team that gave him his big break in Australia and with whom he won Bathurst in 1996.

There are sponsorship duties to take care of, and maintaining the fitness regime which keeps him in trim for driving as well as helping him recover from last year's two back surgeries. There will also be just a tad more time for some aspects of his life that have been neglected because of the time and effort that have gone into his career.

"Number one on that list would be my family - my kids (11, nine and five) and my wife," he says.

"That's been the sacrifice. I'm not the only one who's done that, but something like this makes you look at other parts of your life and change your focus to other important things."

After 15 seasons in V8 Supercars (he made his full-time debut with HRT in 1997 after years in karts and open-wheelers), 'Murph' says he's actually quite excited about looking at his life in a different way.

That's not to say he won't miss the hustle and bustle of full-time V8 Supercars racing, but he is certainly not viewing 2013 as 'the end' of his motorsport career.

It's not 'retirement', but neither is he thinking about what 2014 might hold.

"Missing out on a seat was difficult to accept at the end of



last year when it became a reality, but life changes and this is just another change," he says. "You have to look at the positives - hopefully - that come out of it, and look to new and different things, take change on board as a positive."

"I certainly don't see this year as a 'fightback' for a full-time gig next year. It's a bit early to think about that. I'm going to focus on what I have - the enduros with HRT and the SuperTourers in New Zealand - and do the best I can with that."

"I don't have the financial backing to buy a drive, and I'm not looking to put myself in that position either, so this is the way it is. A lot of things will happen this year that may or may not give me the opportunity to look at that as a possibility for 2014, so we will wait and see. Next year is a long way away to even think about!"

Pointing the finger is the last thing Murphy is doing about his current position. He says there is no one person or set of circumstances that have led to him sitting out this year.

Rather, he believes a combination of factors - including his own decisions - eventually left him the odd man out in the annual game of musical chairs.

"Some of the decisions I made a few years ago changed my position in V8 Supercars; took me away to a position where I was just a hired hand, to do the job. Tasman [Motorsport, the Murphy family team] probably contributed a bit to that."

"We had a plan for what we wanted to achieve, and that took me out of circulation as a driver available to do a job with another team. When that started to

ABOVE: "I'm thirsty Garth, thirsty for some more Bathurst bubbly."

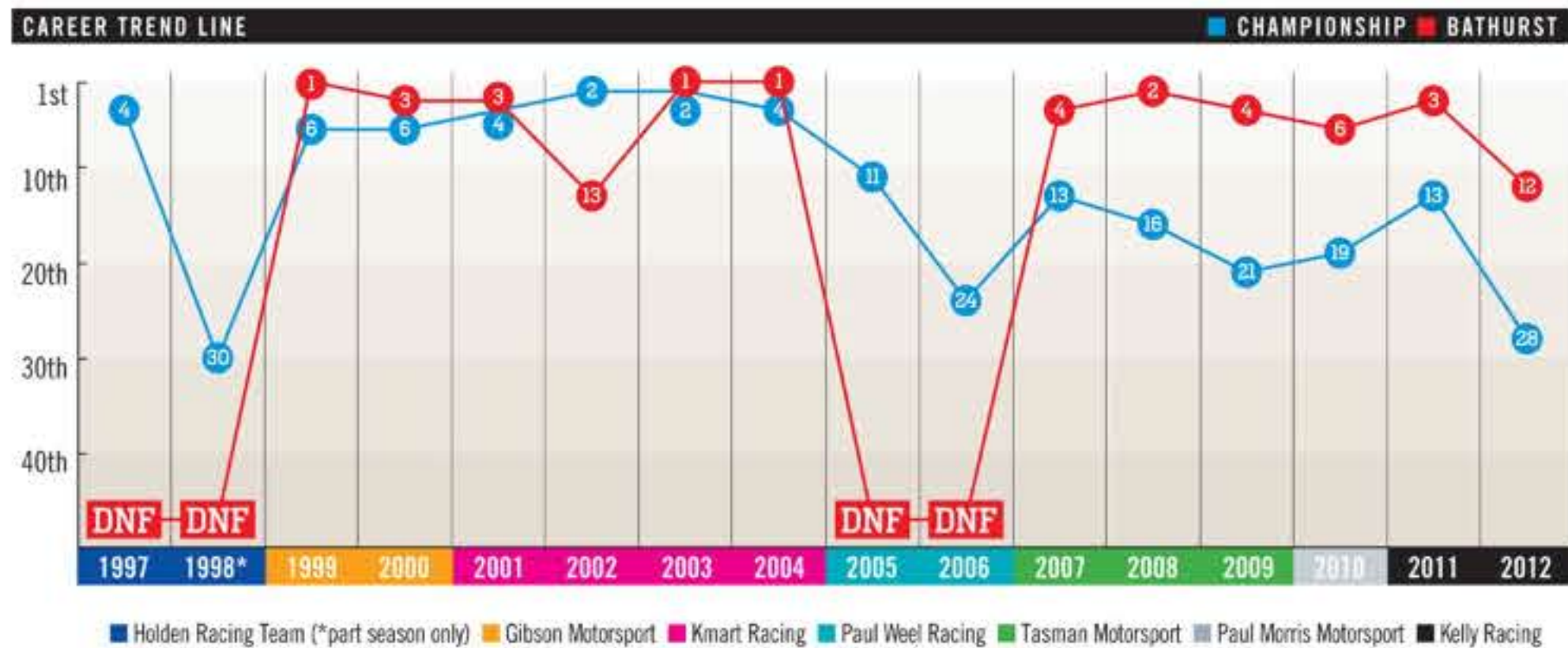
LEFT: The aftermath of the crash that put the brakes on Murph's V8 Supercars career.





**VITALSTATS**

Active years: 1994-current  
 Teams: Bruce Miles (1994), Holden Racing Team (1995-1998), Gibson Motorsport (1999-2000), Kmart Racing (2001-2004), Paul Weel Racing (2005-2006), Tasman Motorsport (2007-2009), Paul Morris Motorsport (2010), Kelly Racing (2011-2012), Holden Racing Team (2013)\*  
 Races: 194  
 Race wins: 28  
 Round wins: 11  
 Bathurst wins: 4 (1996, 1999, 2003, 2004)  
 Pole positions: 13  
 \*Endurance co-driver only.



Since making his full-time debut in V8 Supercars in 1997 off the back of victory at the Mountain in 1996, Murphy has been more of a threat at Bathurst than in the championship, as demonstrated above. Bathurst results in red and championship results in blue.

"There are a lot of things I haven't done that I would like to do, but how realistic some of them might be is another thing. Previously I was stuck in a schedule that takes your whole year and that was my life for a very long time, but things are a bit different and now maybe I can start thinking about doing some other things.

"I'd love to go and do more races overseas, do a Daytona or Le Mans again (he was second in the GT2 class in 1996) and that kind of stuff, but it's not as if because I now have the time, or more time, it's just going to happen. It's not that easy.

"Australia's not the only country going through tough times,

so there are a lot of drivers out there who have done those races year after year who don't have drives. So for the moment I'm focussed on a few things here and as soon as I get on top of those, I might be able to put a bit of effort into working on some other projects."

The SuperTourers series runs throughout the year with a three-month gap in the winter. Murphy will be kept busy with racing and sponsor commitments in his homeland throughout the series, as well as with HRT in the lead-up to the enduros, but he says that little patch of quiet time in the middle of the year could see him trying to put a few other possibilities in place...

"But there's nothing definitive. I really haven't given too much thought to it because the reality is my year is not that much slower than it was before. It's just a different schedule."

By the middle of the year he believes we will all have an idea of how the 'Car of the Now' plan is working out, and hopes the Australian series will be starting to rebuild itself after a difficult few years.

"The whole make-up of the championship has changed a bit and I hope it can strengthen up again and teams can stand on their own two feet, and start to make less compromised decisions in some places.

"It is very difficult to see what's going to happen and where it's going to be, and in six months time we might have a different view of where it's going. V8 Supercars is the pinnacle of motorsport in this part of the world and I hope the fans will embrace the changes that have taken place.

"Things can't stay the same forever and seeing some new sheet metal competing out there is exciting. I certainly hope it takes off and is a raging success."

BELOW: Murphy is keeping himself busy in New Zealand's SuperTourers series, where he is a consistent frontrunner.



**"FOR THEM (KELLY RACING), IT WAS WHAT THEY HAD TO DO. FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, IT WASN'T WHAT I WANTED OR NEEDED - OR ANYTHING THAT MADE ME HAPPY. THAT IS THE TRUTH AND WHILE SOME PEOPLE MAY NOT LIKE TO HEAR IT, THAT'S A FACT."**

- GREG MURPHY



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